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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW VOLUME 110, No. 49, December 3, 2009 THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443 USPS 627-300 75¢

Leadership changes Keith E. Domke named new Thermop publisher

Keith E. Domke is the new publisher and editor of the Independent Record.

Domke, 48, who started his duties on Monday, comes to Thermopolis from Riverton, where he was managing editor of The Ranger, Fremont County's daily newspaper.

"It is an honor to be here and to follow in Pat's footsteps," said Domke, who was in charge of The Ranger newsroom for more than three years. "Pat is a highly respected man who did an absolutely outstanding job here for so many years, and I'm thrilled to be the one who will continue the excellence he maintained at the Independent Record."

Domke is a career newspaper and public relations man who has been in journalism-related fields since graduating from Valparaiso University in Indiana in 1983. He has worked for newspapers in Kansas, Indiana, Illinois and Wyoming, always in a management position, including three stints as managing editor.

He also was a marketing manager for a not-for-profit organization in the Chicago area and worked in public relations for a college in Wisconsin.

"Journalism is my life," Domke said. "It continues to be a thrill for me to publish news in a community setting."

"The local newspaper is the true lifeblood of a community, and the Independent Record is a prime example of that. This is a great community and a great newspaper."

Domke is a multiple newspaper award winner and has been honored 13 times during his career. He has earned seven first-place awards in Indiana and Wyoming and was responsible for the 2008 Photograph of the Year in the Wyoming Press Association Better Newspapers Competition. He also has earned blue-ribbon recognition for headline writing, front page and overall newspaper design.

"I've enjoyed my work for more than a quarter-century and am confident I will con-

tinue to do so here," Domke said. "The staff here is top-notch, and we will continue to work hard to inform Thermopolis and Hot Springs County. The Independent Record will continue to be a needed and wanted commodity."

Domke has covered a wide variety of events from preschool plays to professional sports. In the 1980s, part of his beat at a central Indiana newspaper was to cover the Indianapolis Colts for three seasons.

"But I'm a small-town guy at heart," he said. "This is my true calling. In a town like Thermopolis and a county like Hot Springs, there are countless things that shape the community and give it its character and personality."

"We want to be at as many of those things as we can and tell as many of these important stories as we can. We also want to continue to be a strong advertising outlet for the county and be the voice of record in every aspect."

"Nobody can do that better than the local newspaper. We will continue to be that vehicle now and in the future."

During his first weeks on the job, Domke said he will not only concentrate on getting to know the routine of publishing the Independent Record, but also will focus on getting to know individuals in the community.

"I look forward to meeting and getting to know the people here," Domke said. "Wyoming people are great. If you see me on the street, please say hello, or stop by the office and introduce yourself."

Domke and his wife, Nancy, have been married for 28 years. They plan to relocate to Thermopolis before the end of the year and become stockholders of the IR.

They have two grown daughters. The oldest, Rachelle Willgren, was married over the summer and now lives in Fort Collins, Colo. Justine is a junior at Bethel College in Indiana.



FFA member Mandi Reynolds decorates the chapter's tree for the Tree Festival fund-raiser at Central Bank and Trust next Monday evening. —Lara Love photo

BLM backs mining plan

A plan for bentonite mining in Hot Springs County by Wyo-Ben has been signed by officials in the Worland office of the Bureau of Land Management.

An environmental assessment released for review on July 29 analyzed the proposal to conduct bentonite mining and reclamation at six locations on federal land in this county. The analysis determined no long-term significant impacts would occur.

The study also addressed and mitigated issues raised by the public during the review and comment period, including impacts to ground and surface water quality, wildlife habitat, cultural and paleontological resources, visual intrusions and livestock fencing.

For details, call Marilyn Wegweiser at 347-5100.

Parade, movie, festival set

Shadow Ehlers and Chris Groh, the Snow Queen and King, will ride in the Christmas Light Parade, "Jingle Bell Christmas, on Saturday at 6 p.m.

Lineup is near the Teepee Pools in Hot Springs State Park. The lighted floats will go past the Wyoming Pioneer Home, turn south on Buffalo Street, west past the hospital and on Broadway to the traffic light, then make the traditional U-turn back to Bicentennial Park.

The floats will park on the south side of the 400 block of Broadway for viewing and judging.

There Santa and Mrs. Claus will visit with children, with members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars helping hand out candy.

Children's movies

Children are invited to attend a free movie each of the next three Saturdays at The Ritz, courtesy of Pinnacle Bank. The movie this week is "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." Those who can should bring a canned good or other nonperishable item for the community food drive.

Christmas Tree Festival

The ninth annual Christmas Tree Festival is Monday at Central Bank and Trust. Proceeds from the sale of special wreaths and trees go into the Thermopolis Community Fund.

People are invited to socialize at 5:15 p.m., and children will participate in lighting the outdoor tree at 5:45. The auction begins at 6 p.m.

Decorating contest

The deadline to enter the business and residential lighting contest is Dec. 14.

Homes in Thermopolis, Owl Creek, Lucerne and Hamilton Dome are eligible for judging. Chamber

bucks will be awarded to the winners. Entry forms for both the parade and the contest are available at the chamber office at 220 Park Street.

Tour of Homes

Tickets for the Holiday Tour of Homes on Dec. 14 are on sale at businesses including Storyteller and school offices.

Ticket holders may begin the tour at the home they choose, starting at 5:30 p.m. The tour includes six homes with a reception at the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center.

Door prizes will be drawn during the reception so ticket holders are reminded to bring their ticket with them.

The tour of homes is a fund-raiser for People for People. For details, call Judy Carswell at 921-8264.

Christmas Baskets

Registration for the Christmas Baskets program continues through Dec. 11 at NOWCAP and the HOPE agency. The food baskets will be distributed Dec. 19 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Elf Tree

The Department of Family Services is taking applications from youngsters up to age 14 to be included on the Elf Tree for the holidays. Applications may be picked up and returned to DFS or the H.O.P.E. agency until Friday.

Those wishing to purchase a gift for an "elf" may pick a name from the tree displayed at Owl Creek Graphics.

Gifts must be back to Owl Creek Graphics no later than Dec. 14.

For details, call Donna Joachim at DFS, 864-2158.



Pat Schmidt, left, is turning over leadership of the Thermopolis Independent Record to Keith E. Domke. Schmidt started his newspaper career at the Riverton Ranger in 1970, and Domke has been managing editor of the Ranger the last three years.

Pat Schmidt to retire after a quarter-century at helm

Pat Schmidt is retiring after almost 26 years as editor and publisher of the Thermopolis Independent Record.

Schmidt, who has been a stockholder in the 108-year-old newspaper for almost 32 years, has served longer as editor and publisher of the IR than any other person.

"I remember the help Bill Black gave me when I came here in 1984," he said. "Bill and his sons, John and Dave, also led this newspaper for around 25 years, and I hope to give Keith (Domke) the same counsel, helping only when asked."

"Publishing a community weekly newspaper is all too often an around the clock endeavor. It's time for someone younger with more energy and a fresh outlook to lead the IR and work toward the best community possible."

"The hardest part of this decision has been leaving behind such a talented and dedicated team. Sheri Bury, who has been with the news-

paper for over 30 years, is a good example.

"I hope people appreciate the long-term roles that she, Peggy Shaffer, Lara Love and Donna Penoyer have played in making certain Thermopolis and Hot Springs County are served by the best newspaper possible. I shouldn't leave out Gary Linton, Shawna Farrell, Cindy Glasson, Pam Rangel, Toby Homi and all the others who preceded them."

"It is amazing to see where the former IR people have gone and to see the success they have enjoyed, even in other parts of the world."

Schmidt has sold his shares in the newspaper to the other remaining stockholders, members of the Robert A. Peck family and Domke.

He and Emily will remain in Thermopolis, and she will continue to work at the Gottsche Rehabilitation and Wellness Center.

"This will give us the opportunity to spend more time with our children and grandchildren in Cheyenne and Las Vegas," Schmidt said.

WWDC forwards water projects

by Keith E. Domke

With little or no fanfare, a pair of public hearings dealing with local water-related construction projects were conducted Tuesday night in Thermopolis.

Members of the Wyoming Water Development Commission were on hand for the hearings which concerned the South Thermopolis Water and Sewer District and the Owl Creek Rural Water District. Both projects on the table are at the Phase III level, which means they're ready to be taken from the study phase to the construction phase, if recommended by the WWDC and passed by the 2010 Wyoming Legislature.

Both districts are seeking two-thirds grant approval from the commission. The other funds must be raised through the sponsors, namely the two water districts.

The hearings were conducted to receive any public comment on the proposals.

"Our purpose is not to debate the merits of the projects," WWDC member Phil Ogle said at the outset of each hearing at Big Horn Federal. "No decision will be made tonight."

"Comments will be forwarded for the Jan. 6, 2010, meeting of the Wyoming Water Development Commission. We will consider all comments at that time and make our final recommendation."

Written comments will be accepted until Jan. 6.

The commission's recommendations will be forwarded to Gov. Dave Freudenthal and to the Select Water Committee before going before the Legislature.

South Thermopolis

The first hearing concerned the South Thermopolis Water and Sewer District Supply Project. It's proposing a new storage tank and transmission lines that will serve additional homes within the district.

The total estimated project price tag is \$3.16 million, with two-thirds, or \$2.117 million, coming from the WWDC.

According to information supplied by the WWDC, the basis for the funding recommendation is the district water system does not serve all of the residents within the existing district boundary, and some of those who are served are using booster pumps to receive water at elevations above the current tank. The project will fix these issues and incorporate several new residents who are also having supply problems.

The WWDC said an additional 48 taps could be provided through the project.

No one spoke for or against the project.

Owl Creek

The second hearing went almost as quickly and just as smoothly. Only Owl Creek Ru-

ral Water District president Bart Bader spoke. He centered his comments on the portion of the project that will not be funded by the WWDC, if approved, which totals \$1.565 million.

"We're working on the other funding," he said to the two commission members and to the handful in attendance. "It's going well. I think it will be a done deal."

According to WWDC information, this project is a phased proposal to construct a pipeline, pump station and storage tank.

The first two phases are addressed through this proposal and would build a pipeline and necessary infrastructure to supply the district with potable water supplied by the Town of Thermopolis.

Phase I includes piping from town extending north along the Highway 120 corridor and would supply water for 13 taps. Phase II will incorporate a new pump station and piping that will extend south along Highway 120 through Sage Valley Subdivision to a new storage tank, then extend to the Hanging Horse Subdivision.

Its total cost is \$4.742 million, with the WWDC grant to take care of two-thirds of that cost, or \$3.177 million.

WWDC information estimated that 31 taps could be served through the project.